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Fulbright Hits Nixon Policy, Presses for Hearing on War

By the Associated Press

Senior members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, critical of President Nixon's Vietnam report to the nation, have opened the way for a new round of hearings on the entire war issue.

Chairman J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., called the committee into session today and predicted it would decide to go ahead with the hearings which had been scheduled last week but were postponed until after Nixon's Monday night speech.

Committee aides expressed some doubt the panel would be able to land the two leading administration figures it wants as witnesses: Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird.

The earliest possible day for the hearings was seen as Nov. 17. Next week Sen. Stuart Symington's subcommittee studying U.S. overseas commitments has sessions scheduled on Thailand.

Expressing his disappointment in Nixon's speech on Vietnam, Fulbright said yesterday: "He now has fully and truthfully taken on himself the Johnson war, and I think it is a fundamental error."

Besides Fulbright, calls for

committee hearings on the war came from Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana, and Senators Albert Gore, D-Tenn., and Jacob K. Javits, R-N.Y.

Symington, D-Mo., joined Assistant Democratic Leader Edward M. Kennedy in saying that Nixon's speech shows he has no plan at all for ending the war.

Most Republicans expressed support for Nixon's policies. But GOP Senators Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon and James Pearson of Kansas said they had hoped Nixon would announce new U.S. troop withdrawals.

Pearson, however, predicted a further announcement before Christmas, and added he expects most U.S. ground troops to be out of Vietnam by the end of 1970.

Gore gave the Senate an 11-page critique of Nixon's speech yesterday and warned if the United States withdraws "without laying the foundation for a compromise political settlement, we will be inviting the death knell of democratic processes in South Vietnam and a bloodbath of vast proportions."

Gore's speech brought a spirited defense of Nixon's policies by Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., in the closest thing the Senate saw to a

debate on the President's speech.

Speaking later at an opening session of "Great Decisions—1970" last night at American University, Gore repeated and amplified his Senate remarks.

One conclusion he drew from the Nixon speech, he said, is that "a one-sided withdrawal of U.S. troops on an uncertain, but long drawn-out incremental basis tied to maintenance of the Thieu-Ky regime in power is now the U.S. policy."

He said that "the character of the political regime in Saigon" is "what the war is all about," and warned that "unless we are willing to compromise on this issue no political settlement is in sight."

Gore said he considered the President's speech a "retreat from the constructive positions for a political settlement" Nixon took in May. He warned that the new approach may prolong the war.

Fulbright told reporters he thought Foreign Relations Committee hearings would be educational and could focus on alternative courses facing the United States.

Mansfield, however, suggested

the hearings might help change Nixon's mind.

"I'm not at all sure the President's mind is so closed he wouldn't be open to constructive suggestions," the Montana Democrat said.

Sen. John Sherman Cooper, R-Ky., who has been critical of U.S. Vietnam policy for some time, said he thought Nixon's speech "marked a new policy to end the war. I believe the President is making additional efforts to lower the level of fighting."